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SUBJECT: REPORT: ARF MOVES FORWARD ON DISASTER RELIEF EXERCISE,
WORKPLAN, AND CIVIL-MILITARY ISSUES

REF: A. SECSTATE 122937

¶1. SUMMARY: ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) members made important progress on key disaster relief initiatives at ARF's annual Inter-Sessional Meeting on Disaster Relief (ISM-DR) in Banda Aceh, Indonesia on December 4-6. The United States and the Philippines undertook extensive discussions with a number of ARF members on their participation in the May 2009 ARF Disaster Relief Exercise. In addition, delegations exchanged views on the development of important initiatives such as an ARF Disaster Relief Workplan and an ARF model legal agreement for the use and status of military forces involved in disaster relief. Disaster relief remains among the most productive issue on ARF's agenda. END SUMMARY.

KEY OUTCOMES

¶2. ARF DISASTER RELIEF EXERCISE (VDR): Along the margins and during the plenary of the ISM-DR, USDEL and the Philippines extensively discussed ARF members' participation in the May 2009 ARF Disaster Relief Exercise in the Philippines (Ref A). Specifically, USDEL held substantive discussions with China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Canada, the European Union, and Papua New Guinea (reported septel to country desks and embassies). Overall, participation and interest from ARF nations, particularly military participation, is growing in advance of the January 19-28 planning meetings. EAP/RSP will continue to closely work with State, DoD, and embassies to clarify ARF participation in the exercise, termed Voluntary Demonstration of Response (VDR), and associated planning events.

¶3. ARF HADR WORKPLAN: In part due to U.S. financial assistance to the ARF Unit of the ASEAN Secretariat, the Secretariat presented a draft workplan for ARF's efforts in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR). Designed to more effectively focus, organize, and strengthen ARF's HADR efforts, the workplan will continue to be developed leading up to its endorsement at the July 2009 Ministerial meeting. Based on the recommendations of the delegations of Australia, the United States, and others, the workplan identified disaster management/emergency response capacity-building and disaster risk reduction as two key, short-term areas of focus for ARF's HADR efforts.

¶4. MILITARY AND CIVIL DEFENSE ASSETS (MCDA) STATUS TEMPLATE: Following the mandate given by ARF Foreign Ministers in July 2008 in Singapore to explore the feasibility of the proposal, ISM-DR participants briefly discussed the development of an ARF model legal agreement on the use and status of MCDA. As this concept progresses, ARF would develop the text of a model agreement that ARF nations could legally activate on an individual and bilateral basis between assisting nations and the affected state in the event of a disaster requiring foreign MCDA. USDEL presented its views on the concept. The presentation received largely positive, but limited agreement on the utility of developing the agreement. Along the margins, USDEL met with Indonesian Foreign Ministry (DEPLU) and a disaster relief agency representative to further discuss the concept. In principle, the Indonesian representatives agreed on the utility of developing a model ARF agreement. Furthermore, they suggested that the ARF

multilateral text could lead to the development of more extensive -bilaterally-based arrangements. Indonesia suggested that the development of these multilateral and bilateral arrangements, similar to temporary Status of Forces Arrangements (SOFAs), could be branded under a different name such as Memorandums of Understanding on HA/DR Missions. State and DoD will help develop this concept further with ARF, particularly through the ARF VDR Exercise and the early April ARF Seminar on Legal Regulations in Disaster Relief Military Operations hosted by China.

REMAINING AGENDA ITEMS

15. ARF HADR STRATEGIC GUIDANCE and STANDBY ARRANGEMENT SYSTEM: Australia continued to press for efforts by ARF members on further refining the ARF HADR Strategic Guidance document and ARF's draft concept for a standby arrangement system continued to stall. The document is intended to provide guidance to senior regional disaster relief civil and military policymakers. The meeting discussed next steps for the document including testing and validating the Strategic Guidance through future tabletop or field exercises. (Note: This initiative was extensively discussed at a smaller working group on December 4th of the ISM-DR Shepherds.) Furthermore, it appears that the concept for the development an ARF Standby Arrangement System may be put on hold for some time. That proposal's potential relationship to the ASEAN Standby Arrangement System and Operating Procedures

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(ASEAN SASOPs) still remains unclear to those in ASEAN and more broadly in ARF.

16. EXISTING ASEAN AND GLOBAL COOPERATION ON DISASTER RELIEF: Various government and non-government representatives briefed ARF on the existing regional and global HADR work, both regionally and globally. Discussions and/or presentations distributed on the following topics included:

- ARF Workshop on Stabilization and Reconstruction Issues, September 10-12, 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- ARF Desktop Exercise on Disaster Relief, May 1-2, 2008 in Jakarta, Indonesia
- 13th Tokyo Defense Forum "International Cooperation in Disaster Relief," October 21-24, 2008 in Tokyo, Japan
- 3rd Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, December 2-4, 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Ongoing and emerging global and regional HADR efforts discussed included:

- The Australia-Indonesia Disaster Reduction Facility just established in Jakarta, Indonesia.
- EU Crisis Response and Prevention Framework Management system.
- Aceh, Indonesia Strategy National Action Plan
- UNOCHA Disaster Relief Operations and Standby Arrangements
- World Bank Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction
- UN International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2005-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action.
- European Commission Early Warning System

17. POC INFORMATION: POC for further questions, comments, or to obtain more background and ISM-DR meeting documents and briefs is: EAP/RSP Kevin Sheives, sheiveskw@state.gov, 202-647-1217. For additional background on ARF and U.S. participation in ARF, please visit the State Dept Intranet Site at <http://eap.state.gov/EAPOffices/RSP/ARF.cfm>

18. COMMENT: Disaster relief has emerged as a key topic for ARF to make substantive, concrete contributions to regional security. The United States and other like-minded countries are seeking to focus its agenda where it can bring added value to the panoply of existing regional and global efforts (ASEAN, APEC, among many others). For now, ARF's HADR efforts will focus on developing civil-military interoperability, linking many of these ongoing regional HADR efforts, and potentially disaster risk reduction.

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